

Function Word Phonology : A lexical account
Heather Newell & Tobias Scheer

Phonological variation between weak and strong forms of function words (*her/'ər*, *him/'əm*) is due to a combination of phonological underspecification of functional items in the lexicon and the grammaticalization of syllabic space. Stress assignment is realized as the addition of syllabic space (depending on the theory: x-slots, moras, CV units) to phonological strings. Addition of this space to cycles containing phonologically underspecified functional morphemes causes their pronunciation as independent full forms. In its absence the reduced form is produced. This is shown to allow for a theory where variation between weak and full pronunciations of function words is directly linked to their morpho-syntactic structure/position. A further advantage of such an analysis is that it is fully modular; Phonology does not need to distinguish between so-called functional and lexical items. This analysis is compared with the current theories on the market (the phonological invisibility of function words (almost all current OT accounts) and subcategorization frames (ex. Tyler 2019) and is argued to avoid the problems raised by these accounts. In this talk we will discuss function words in English, German, and Hebrew, but will hint at how the analysis extends cross-linguistically.